

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

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TWO HAWAIIAN CAVE ANIMALS PROPOSED FOR ENDANGERED OR THREATENED LISTS

Two eyeless Hawaiian cave animals, a wolf spider and a shrimp-like amphipod, have been proposed as endangered or threatened species by the Interior Department's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Keith M. Schreiner, Associate Director, announced today.

The proposal, published in the June 16, 1978, Federal Register, also lists the caves in which the species live as critical habitat. Interested persons have until August 15, 1978, to comment on the rulemaking.

The populations of the Kauai cave wolf spider, which is proposed for endangered status, and the Kauai cave amphipod, proposed for the threatened list, have declined because human activities have affected their fragile habitats.

"Endangered" means that a species is in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range. "Threatened," not nearly so dire a status, means that a species is likely to become endangered within the foreseeable future throughout all or a portion of its range.

Both species occur on the Island of Kauai. The amphipod exists in two lava tubes, Koloa Caves #1 and #2 underneath a sugarcane field and in a small limestone cave about 4 miles away. The spider occurs in Koloa Cave #2.

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Littering, trampling, vandalism, and destruction of cave tree roots have been primarily responsible for the decline of these species. In addition, the limestone cave in which the amphipod lives is being destroyed by quarrying activities. Tree roots, both living and dead, are the main energy source in the caves. Some organic material percolates in the cave through cracks associated with the roots. They also provide living areas for other animals which become the food of the wolf spider.

As if the amphipod didn't have enough trouble, it is sometimes preyed upon by the spider. But this does not appear to be a factor in the population decline of the amphipod.

The quarter-inch amphipod is whitish in color and completely eyeless. It has long transparent legs and is distantly related to the shrimp. The wolf spider, also eyeless, is about 2 inches long with bristly legs. It is unusual in that it does not construct a web. Rather it stalks, pursues, and overpowers its prey. Both species are uniquely adapted to cave ecosystems and depend upon water seeping through the ground to sustain life in the caves.

Because of their isolation from the mainland, the Hawaiian Islands offer great potential for evolutionary research. Hawaii also has more endangered and threatened species than any other State.

Persons wishing to comment on this proposal should write the Director (OES), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of the Interior, Washington, D.C. 20240.

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